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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 00146

AMEMBASSY ROME PLEASE PASS TO VATICAN

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [UR](#)
SUBJECT: ROLL OVER LENIN: KAZAN CATHEDRAL TO BE
REBUILT ON RED SQUARE

REFS: A) 90 MOSCOW 20019 B) 90 MOSCOW 41463

[1](#)1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT

SUMMARY

[1](#)2. RED SQUARE'S KAZAN CATHEDRAL, A POWERFUL RUSSIAN PATRIOTIC SYMBOL BLOWN UP BY STALIN, IS TO BE REBUILT. CONSERVATIVE RUSSIENS CHEER WHILE LIBERAL ORTHODOX BELIEVERS FRET THAT THE REBUILDING MAY PLAY INTO THE HANDS OF THOSE WHO WOULD LIKE TO USE THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH (ROC) FOR RUSSIAN NATIONALIST AS OPPOSED TO SPIRITUAL ENDS. THE ROC'S FOREIGN MINISTER UNDERSTANDS THESE CONCERNS; NEVERTHELESS, HE IS GAMBLING THAT CONSERVATIVES' INTEREST IN THE REBUILDING WILL EVENTUALLY LEAD THEM TO BELIEVE IN THE ROC INSTEAD OF SIMPLY WANTING TO USE IT. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)3. THE KAZAN CATHEDRAL ON MOSCOW'S RED SQUARE USED TO BE ONE OF RUSSIA'S MOST REVERED RELIGIOUS AND HISTORIC SHRINES. IT WAS BUILT DURING THE REIGN OF THE FIRST ROMANOV TSAR. PTER THE GREAT LATER INSPECTED TROOPS UPON THEIR RETURN FROM THE POLTAVA BATTLE IN FRONT OF IT AND CELEBRATIONS WERE HELD THERE AFTER NAPOLEON'S RETREAT FROM MOSCOW. AFTER 1917, THE CATHEDRAL WAS FORCEFULLY TAKEN AWAY FROM THE ROC AND FELL INTO DISREPAIR. TOUSANDS OF RUBLES WERE SPENT RESTORING IT IN THE 1920S -- UNTIL ITS CHIEF RESTORER WAS PACKED OFF TO SIBERIA AND THE CATHEDRAL WAS BLOWN UP BY STALIN. THE CATHEDRAL'S FOUNDATIONS WERE LATER GRACED FOR A TIME BY PUBLIC TOILETS AND NOW STAND EMPTY.

[1](#)4. ON JUNE 5, 1990 THE NEW MOSCOW CITY GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED THAT THE CATHEDRAL WOULD BE REBUILT ON ITS ORIGINAL FOUNDATIONS BY THE MOSCOW DIVISION OF THE ALL-RUSSIA SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORICAL MONUMENTS AND CULTURE (SEE REF A). THE COST IS EXPECTED TO TOTAL ONE MILLION RUBLES. MONEY FOR THE REBUILDING IS ALREADY BEING COLLECTED FROM PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS. THE CATHEDRAL IS SCHEDULED TO BE READY IN TIME FOR MOSCOW'S 850TH ANNIVERSARY IN 1995.

[1](#)5. THIS DEVELOPMENT OBVIOUSLY DID NOT ESCAPE THE NOTICE OF THE ROC'S NEWLY-ELECTED PATRIARCH, ALEXEI II, WHO RECENTLY WEIGHED IN IN SUPPORT OF THIS INITIATIVE. ON NOVEMBER 4, ALEXEI II ORGANIZED A TRIUMPHAL MARCH FROM THE KREMLIN'S USPENSKIY CATHEDRAL (RECENTLY RECLAIMED FOR OCCASIONAL ROC RELIGIOUS SERVICES) TO THE KAZAN CATHEDRAL'S EMPTY LOT, WHERE HE LED RELIGIOUS SERVICES, BLESSED THE REBUILDING'S FIRST STONE, AND ADDRESSED THE ATTENDING FAITHFUL, FOLLOWED BY A SPEECH BY MOSCOW MAYOR GAVRIIL POPOV.

[1](#)6. VISITING AMERICAN SCHOLARS WHO ATTENDED THE CEREMONY TOLD POLOFF LATER THAT FIVE TO SIX THOUSAND MUSCOVITES WERE ALSO PRESENT. THEIR IMPRESSION WAS THAT ALEXEI II HAD EXCELLENT CONTACT WITH THE CROWD,

WHO LISTENED ATTENTIVELY TO HIS ADDRESS. HEARING HIM WAS NOT A PROBLEM, AS AN "AMERICAN QUALITY" SOUND SYSTEM BOOMED HIS WORDS, THE RELIGIOUS SERVICE AND ACCOMPANYING BELL CHIMES ALL OVER RED SQUARE. THE AMERICANS' COMMENT: "LENIN MUST HAVE BEEN ROLLING OVER IN HIS GLASS BOX A FEW FEET AWAY."

17. DISCUSSIONS AMONG VARIOUS ROC ACTIVISTS AND OTHER OPINION LEADERS HAVE RESULTED IN A CONSENSUS THAT THE KAZAN CATHEDRAL WILL INDEED BE REBUILT IN SOME FORM BUT MIXED FEELINGS AS TO THE USEFULNESS OF THIS ENDEAVOR. STRONGLY IN THE PRO-REBUILDING CAMP ARE A NUMBER OF CONSERVATIVE AND RUSSIAN NATIONALIST FIGURES, SUCH AS "LITERATURNAYA ROSSIYA" JOURNALISTS AND "NASH SOVREMENNİK" EDITOR AND WRITER STANISLAV KUNYAYEV (SEE REF B). THE FACT THAT SOME OF THESE FIGURES ARE AGNOSTICS OR ATHEISTS DOES NOT AFFECT THEIR SUPPORT, WHICH IS BASED ON THE DESIRE TO REVIVE RUSSIA'S GLORIOUS PAST (SYMBOLIZED BY THE CATHEDRAL), REGARDLESS OF HOW THIS AFFECTS THE FORTUNES OF THE ROC.

18. IN THE OTHER CAMP, LIBERAL ROC LEADERS SUCH AS HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST VIKTOR POPKOV STRONGLY OPPOSE THE REBUILDING. ONE OF THEIR REASONS IS PRECISELY THAT THE KAZAN CATHEDRAL HAS BECOME MORE OF A NATIONALISTIC THAN A RELIGIOUS SYMBOL. THEY ARE CONVINCED THAT ITS REBUILDING WOULD ENCOURAGE THE TENDENCY TO HAVE ORTHODOXY SERVE NATIONALIST AS OPPOSED TO MORAL ENDS. POPKOV SPOKE FOR MANY LIBERAL ROC BELIEVERS WHEN HE TOLD POLOFF: "THE ORTHODOX CHURCH SPENT ENOUGH TIME SERVING THE STATE UNDER THE TSARS. IF ANY GOOD AT ALL COULD STILL COME OUT OF THE REVOLUTION IT WOULD BE TO CREATE A TRUE DIVISION BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE IN THIS COUNTRY." ANOTHER REASON IS MORE PROSAIC. WITH THOUSANDS OF BADLY DILAPIDATED CHURCHES NOW BEING HANDED OVER TO THE ROC ALL OVER THE USSR, LIBERALS BELIEVE THAT ONE MILLION RUBLES COULD BE MUCH BETTER SPENT REVIVING WORSHIP THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY INSTEAD OF TYING IT UP IN ONE MORE CHURCH IN MOSCOW.

19. AS HAS BECOME HIS CUSTOM, ROC FOREIGN MINISTER ARCHBISHOP KIRILL -- REPUTED TO BE THE SMARTEST MAN IN THE ROC -- HAS STAKED OUT A POSITION SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE. HE RECENTLY TOLD POLOFF THAT HE WAS WELL AWARE OF THE VARIOUS CONCERNS SURROUNDING PROPOSALS TO REBUILD THE KAZAN CATHEDRAL (AND THE SIMILAR SITUATION OF THE CHRIST THE SAVIOR CATHEDRAL, BLOWN UP AND REPLACED BY AN OUTDOOR PUBLIC SWIMMING POOL). HE ADDED THAT HE TOOK THESE CONCERNS SO SERIOUSLY THAT HE HAD DELAYED RECOMMENDING OPEN SUPPORT FOR THE REBUILDINGS TO PATRIARCH ALEXEI II WHILE HE MET WITH A NUMBER OF PEOPLE ON THE SUBJECT AND WEIGHED THE PROS AND CONS.

110. ARCHBISHOP KIRILL EXPLAINED WHY HE HAD EVENTUALLY COME OUT IN FAVOR OF ROC SUPPORT FOR THE ENDEAVORS. FINANCIALLY, HE REALIZED IT MADE SENSE. AFTER CANVASSING WOULD-BE DONORS, HE BECAME CONVINCED THAT IF THIS OPTION WERE NOT AVAILABLE THEY WOULD SIMPLY NOT GIVE ANY MONEY AT ALL TO THE ROC: "WE'RE NOT TAKING ONE MILLION RUBLES AWAY FROM STARVING PARISHES; WE'RE EITHER ACCEPTING OR REJECTING ONE MILLION RUBLES." AS FOR THE MORE DELICATE NATIONALISM ASPECT, THE ARCHBISHOP SAID THAT HE HAD COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT IT WAS STILL AN OPEN QUESTION OF WHO WOULD INFLUENCE WHOM: "IGNORING THEM (CONSERVATIVES AND NATIONALISTS) IS NOT THE ANSWER -- BY GETTING INVOLVED, THEY MAY COME TO BELIEVE IN US INSTEAD OF WANTING TO USE US."

111. LENINGRAD MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.

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